

Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission



Chair
David O. Fakunle, Ph.D.

Vice Chair
Charles L. Chavis, Jr., Ph.D.

Staff
Joy Ayomiposi Sarimakin
Zenita Hurley, Esq.
Kristin McFarlane, Esq.
Stephanie Thompson, PMP

Commissioners
David Armenti
Iris Leigh Barnes, Ph.D.
Simone Barrett-Williams, Ph.D.
Nicholas Creary, Ph.D.
Roger Davidson, Ph.D.
Maya Davis
Teisha Dupree-Wilson, Ph.D.
Omar Eaton-Martinez
Christopher E. Haley
Kirkland Hall, Sr., Ph.D.
Elizabeth Hughes
Izetta Mobley, Ph.D.
Carl Snowden
Marshall Stevenson, Ph.D.
Stephanie Suerth

Business Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, February 13th, 2023
Time: 11:30am-12:51pm Eastern Time
Location: Virtual

Attendance

Commissioners	
David Armenti	X
Iris Barnes	X
Simone Barrett-Williams	ABS
Charles Chavis	X
Nick Creary	X
Roger Davidson	ABS
Maya Davis	X
Teisha Dupree-Wilson	ABS
Omar Eaton-Martinez	X
David Fakunle	ABS
Chris Haley	ABS
Kirkland Hall	X
Elizabeth Hughes	X
Izetta Mobley	ABS
Carl Snowden	X
Marshall Stevenson	X
Stephanie Suerth	X
Staff	
Joy Sarimakin	X
Zenita Hurley	X
Kristin McFarlane	X
Stephanie Thompson	ABS

For more information on the Maryland Lynching Truth and Reconciliation Commission, visit <https://msa.maryland.gov/lynching-truth-reconciliation/>

Members of the Public Present

Elaine Rice Bachmann, Emily Oland Squires, Will Schwarz, Rev Diane Teichert, Hess Stinson, Kristian Blake, Sheilah Kast, Auset Reid, Virginie Ladisch, Michelle Gawerc, Amy Millin

Call to Order

Commissioner Armenti called the meeting to order at 11:38am.

Approval of Minutes

The January 2023 business retreat minutes were by accepted by the Commission.

Public & Chair's Comments

In absence of Chair Fakunle, Commissioner Armenti thanked all members of the public for their presence and asked them to introduce themselves.

Logistics Committee Report

Commissioner Davis stated that there is no specific update from the responded Logistics Committee. She however mentioned that the plan for the Logistics Committee ought to be mentioned at the Retreat. She added some working of the Committee are yet to defined that it will be resolved via consultations with Stephanie Thompson, the Chair, and the Vice Chair.

Research Committee Report

Commissioner Armenti gave update on the Research Committee stating that a research link meeting was fixed for Wednesday February 22nd at 4:00pm. He stated that the meeting will not involve the Logistics Committee compared to the past. He added that some restructuring of the subgroup working structure has been tabled for the year 2023 by breaking off inner workings of the committees which has been made known to some of the commissioners concerned. He stressed further that commissioners are free to join the Research Committee. The invitation was extended to the public especially for collaborations and contributions. He added the registration details are available on the website of the Commission. He added that the Research Committee has been working in collaboration with the genealogy firm

and intends to do more with university audiences, associate groups and the public. He stated the Committee well represented with the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) throughout Maryland State with instance of collaboration with Public History course at Towson University. He added that the committee welcomes contributions on engagement of students, and the public to improve the research toolkit and other workings of the Committee. He added the Committee will ensure that some of the works that are yet to be published on the Commission's website will be done. He concluded that the workings of the Committee are based on public interests especially from the counties especially Prince George's, Kent, Caroline and Queens Anne's. He thanked Rev. Teichert for highlighting the Community Remembrance Program to take place on Saturday April 15th while recommending that she should communicate with the committee on how to collaborate with the program.

Reconciliation & Justice Committee

Commissioner Creary stated that the committee met after the retreat on January 27th to coalesce some of the discussions which include establishment of public comments/suggestion section on the website for recommendations/feedback, establishing/stagging additional events e.g. discussions of terminologies/concepts such as critical race theory, woke versus black history, putting up things to honor victims of lynching, construction of the report/final report for educational purposes, and the possibility of follow-up after hearings. Also, some key points follow-up strategy was raised. He mentioned that action points were allocated to members to follow-up on the discussion points.

Commissioner Davis asked Commissioner Creary if it is possible for the public comment to be added to the section where the contact details of the commission is placed on the commission's email and he agreed to that. Commissioner Armenti mentioned that the approach designed by Emily may be considered in the Research Committee.

Commissioner Armenti said he reached out to the Vice Chair Chavis on the details of the Business Retreat held on January 27th about the possible reimagining of the committees into larger set of work groups, He emphasized the need for the development of the work groups by citing example of education committee. He added that Montgomery County has gone ahead with the step. Vice Chair Chavis gave inputs into some of the grounds covered by the commission. He stated that the commission had some level of increasing representation with the Sheriff's

Association and the Attorney General Association. Delegate White was also mentioned in terms of sponsoring a bill which will develop into a full legislation. He mentioned that the team is also considering two hybrid format meetings regarding a project-based teams versus having the specific team meetings. Commissioner Creary commented on Rev Teichert's request stating that an extension is being sought to have the final report by December 2025, and the sunset of the commission is set to June 2026.

New Business

Zenita stated that she does not have status update on the Open Commissioner positions but emphasized that there are open positions that need to be filled. She added that a top candidate will be announced for the PM position and introduced to the Commission soon.

Commissioner Creary asked if the new reimagined committees need some discussions with respect to memberships and leaderships. Commissioner Davis responded that the intention was to discuss the committee structure. She added that considerations were given to factors such as skillset, possible roles, location and level of assistance to be rendered. Commissioner Creary stated that he is happy to continue working with the Justice Committee. Commissioner Armenti added that it is important to discuss the list as it might be the first time some commissioners and others are aware of it. He asked of Commissioner Hughes's opinion. Commissioner Hughes stated that it will be helpful to distribute the list to entire commission for clarity. She added that commissioners should respond back stating their preferred work groups. Commissioner Creary added that by next month commissioners should have decided the committees they intend to work with.

On the open commissioner position, Commissioner Armenti discussed concerning the process and Commissioner Creary responded that it's better if an expedited action can be sought on it compared to the previous request from the Governor's office. Commissioner Armenti affirmed that the process needs to be revisited and that the public can also be involved and using the Commission's email for questions and enquiries about the position. Zenita weighed in on the matter by stating that there was a leaning towards an individual on the position and that at a time the commission received resumes and expression of interests. Commissioner Creary asked if there is a template or job description for the members of the commission specifically for the public that can be revised/reviewed. Zenita asked if the position needs a job description or to make the mandate of the commission known publicly

with added information on expected participation, she added that the idea to put some form of description on the website was affirmed by the Vice Chair and then resume collection and expression of interest can be collected.

Commissioner Armenti asked what the situation is between Justice & Reconciliation with collaborators such as the Maryland State Department of Education, Maryland State Police and others' inputs. Zenita asked if those who met with Delegate White had discussions about amending the bill to have representatives from the government entities mentioned above. Commissioner Creary responded that there was no discussion on that. Elaine Bachmann added that the discussion was also about future staffing of the Commission. She however added her misgiving about adding the law enforcement into the commission stating that partnership might be fine. Commissioner Creary commented that a partnership with such will be better rather than expand the size of the commission going by the misgiving already expressed. Commissioner Armenti mentioned that some level of collaboration has been established with Maryland State Police. Commissioner Davis added that the important thing is to ensure strengthened collaborations with the Commission. He mentioned the instance of the Baltimore County Police who are ready to work with the Commission. He added that identifying allies or some of their representatives give strength to the intended collaboration. Commissioner Creary responded that some clarity about the specific law enforcement should be stated. He suggested that a law enforcement expert might be the safe option rather than the law enforcement agencies to be added as part of the Commission.

Announcements

Commissioner Armenti mentioned the April 15th event which is Prince George's County's soil collection ceremony. Commissioner Martinez mentioned the ASALH 2023 Conference, September 20-24th in Jacksonville, FL. Zenita mentioned that she and Kristin recently presented to the Bureau of Justice Assistance experiences of the grant winners on behalf of the MLTRC. One of the challenges she expressed was identifying and recruiting descendants of the community members that participated in lynching to participate in public hearings. She however mentioned that one vital recommendation was the involvement of connected bodies such as the church within the community may appeal to those community members to participate. She added that this could also be extended to law enforcement who might be able to share stories about what they have heard and how they feel about lynching. Commissioner Armenti agreed with the position that much is yet to be done on the aspect of involving perpetrator descendants at least not by the Commission through the

genealogical work. He however mentioned the works of Amy Millin and Will Schwarz among others with the Baltimore County Coalition where a perpetrator descendant participated. He added that it will be good to take cues from successful instances going forward. Amy Millin mentioned that one of the recommendations from the Baltimore County coalition is that the descendant witnesses been acknowledged with some official certificate, recognition, etc. from the State. Will Schwarz however added this step has been discussed early in the Commission that such step of acknowledgement should follow the invitations to the witnesses after participation. Commissioner Davis concurred that it is a valuable step to take adding that additional engagement is needed. Commissioner Armenti stressed that the observation also rolls into the committee and work group structure where some communication logjams about acknowledged post-hearings exist because of lack of clarity on whose duty it is to ensure acknowledgement. He concluded that the lessons will be integrated into the entire process going forward to ensure that all concerned entities are well acknowledged.

Adjournment

Meeting was adjourned by Commissioner Armenti at 12:51 pm.